

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 813

By Johnson

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize George Hamilton IV upon his illustrious career in country music and his fiftieth anniversary as a member of the Grand Ole Opry.

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that this General Assembly should pay homage to those inspirational artists who perform pure and passionate country music; and

WHEREAS, George Hamilton IV is an exemplary country music singer who has inspired and uplifted audiences with his unique musical style for decades; and

WHEREAS, born July 19, 1937, to George Hege Hamilton III and Mary Lillian Pendry, Mr. Hamilton rose from humble beginnings in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to reach the greatest heights in country music; and

WHEREAS, passionate about country music since childhood, he continued this first love into his early teens; Mr. Hamilton's parents would often send him by Greyhound bus to Nashville to see his country music heroes perform on-stage live at the Grand Ole Opry; and

WHEREAS, as a nineteen-year-old student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Mr. Hamilton recorded "A Rose and a Baby Ruth" for Colonial Records, which climbed to number six on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and was certified a gold record in 1956 after selling one million copies; and

WHEREAS, he followed his initial success with the release of other hits, including "The Teen Commandments of Love," which he recorded with Paul Anka and Johnny Nash, and "Why Don't They Understand"; and

WHEREAS, finding himself a worldwide pop star, Mr. Hamilton toured as a teen balladeer for the next three years with several legendary stars, including Buddy Holly, Gene

Vincent, Eddie Cochran, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bobby Darin, Chuck Berry, Sam Cooke, and the Everly Brothers; he also appeared on Broadway with Louis Armstrong in April 1957, and hosted his own network television series, the *George Hamilton IV Show*, on CBS-TV in 1958 and ABC-TV in 1959; and

WHEREAS, never really straying far from his musical roots, Mr. Hamilton decided one evening while sitting in the Ryman Auditorium enjoying the Grand Ole Opry to switch from pop music to the musical genre he so deeply loved: country music; and

WHEREAS, after he moved his family to Nashville in early 1960, the Grand Ole Opry welcomed him as a member on February 6, 1960, and he has been a fixture in country music ever since; and

WHEREAS, after Chet Atkins signed Mr. Hamilton to RCA Records, he released his first country hit, "Before This Day Ends," in 1960; and

WHEREAS, three years later, in 1963, he released one of his biggest hits, "Abilene," which spent four weeks in the number one spot on *Billboard's* country singles chart; and

WHEREAS, already a household name, George Hamilton IV followed the tremendous success of "Abilene" by recording several more hit songs, including "Fort Worth, Dallas, or Houston," renditions of Gordon Lightfoot's "Steel Rail Blues" and "Early Morning Rain," the folk-influenced "Urge for Going," "Break My Mind," and "Canadian Pacific," and his top five single, "She's a Little Bit Country"; and

WHEREAS, known as the International Ambassador of Country Music, Mr. Hamilton began touring the world extensively in the early 1970s, appearing at international country music festivals in London, Sweden, Finland, Holland, Norway, Germany, Paris, Zurich, and Vienna, earning the respect and admiration of his colleagues and fans alike for his hard work, dedication, and talent; and

WHEREAS, while touring Europe, George Hamilton IV became the first country music performer to play behind the Iron Curtain, appearing at several sold-out concerts in Prague, Czechoslovakia in March of 1974; and

WHEREAS, also in 1974, the U.S. State Department sent Mr. Hamilton to Moscow to give a lecture and concert on the history of country music at Moscow University and at the Palace of Culture of the Railway Workers; and

WHEREAS, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Mr. Hamilton hosted his own television series, the *George Hamilton IV Show*, on national television in Canada and on BBC-TV in England; his television show was also broadcast in New Zealand, South Africa, Hong Kong, and Ireland, making George Hamilton IV the face of country music worldwide and an international household name; and

WHEREAS, also in the 1970s and 1980s, Mr. Hamilton hosted, narrated, and performed the music for several acclaimed BBC radio series about the history of American country music, including *How the West was Sung* produced by Sir Charles Chilton; and

WHEREAS, a devout Christian whose deep faith is expressed in all his endeavors, Mr. Hamilton has appeared as a frequent musical guest with Reverend Billy Graham in America and Europe; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, he was honored with the Gospel Music Association's Dove Award in 1988 and was nominated for 2004 and 2005 Dove Awards, and he was also honored by his home state in 2000 when he was inducted into the North Carolina Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, he is beloved and admired worldwide, and in 2006, the U.S. Ambassador to England held a reception in London in Mr. Hamilton's honor, recognizing and celebrating his fiftieth anniversary in music and his unique contributions to the globalization of country music; and

WHEREAS, offering an impressive and indelible discography, George Hamilton IV has released over 100 albums and recordings for most of the major record labels throughout his legendary career, including two albums with his son, George Hamilton V; and

WHEREAS, always comfortable performing on stage, he recently received rave reviews throughout London for narrating and co-starring in *Patsy*, the West End musical production based on the life of Patsy Cline; and

WHEREAS, after more than fifty years in the music business, Mr. Hamilton still takes his legendary voice out on the road and can regularly be found performing on stage at the Grand Ole Opry; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hamilton's influence and numerous contributions to the world of country music are reflected in the sounds and performances of many of the younger country music stars today; and

WHEREAS, George Hamilton IV is one of the most respected and esteemed figures in country music, and his singing talents have garnered him the admiration of country music fans throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, his momentous achievements aside, Mr. Hamilton is most proud of the love and support of his wife of over fifty-one years, Adelaide Peyton Hamilton; his children, Edwin Peyton Hamilton and wife, Anne Davis Hamilton, George Hege Hamilton V and wife, Lillian Patterson Hamilton, and Mary Hamilton Arcure and husband, Douglas Michael Arcure; his grandchildren, Peyton McAlester Hamilton, George Hege Hamilton VI, James Michael Arcure, and Aubrey Elizabeth Arcure; and his brother, Robert Cabot Hamilton; and

WHEREAS, George Hamilton IV, a living legend, epitomizes the creative spirit and commitment to this State's cultural heritage, and he truly serves as an exemplary Ambassador for Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and recognize George Hamilton IV upon his legendary career in country music, congratulate him on his fiftieth anniversary as a member of the Grand Ole Opry, thank him for all he has done to preserve and extend the musical heritage of this State, and wish him the very best in all his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.